Editorial

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The *Journal of Marketing Analytics* has been running for 2 years now. We have attempted to carve out our space in the academic and practitioner worlds through our mission statement and the papers we publish. We began preparations in 2012, and formally launched in 2013. As a journal, we are committed to publishing research and insights that advance theory and practice, and providing a rigorous and equitable review process.

For me, as the Editor-in-Chief, managing a double blind peer review sometimes poses difficult challenges. We would like to engage with the best and brightest in their respective fields. But needless to say, those same expert reviewers can sometimes also be the ones who are busiest, and most difficult to reach. We have been, and still are, constantly looking for experts to strengthen our editorial board.

We were, and still are, fully committed to our mission. The *Journal of Marketing Analytics* aspires to bring together world-class research that meets two essential criteria. We like our publications to be practical and ‘hands-on’ and at the same time demonstrate scientific rigor and a thorough grounding in the existing nomothetic network, the commonly respected and accepted contemporary body of knowledge.

Marketing analytics, by its very nature, is an applied discipline. In many academic disciplines, the use of students as research subjects is quite common. For fundamental empirical research this poses less of a concern than it does for marketing analytics.

In marketing analytics, the choice of subjects has a direct bearing on the validity and applicability of research findings. When

you research the behavior and intentions of *real* customers buying *real* products (or services), you gain validity by soliciting ‘real’ research subjects. Practical relevance of research findings is an important criterion when we evaluate papers that are submitted to our journal.

The world around us is slowly but steadily transforming into an increasingly digital one. Our marketing and research obviously needs to reflect this change. In the last 2 years, we have seen some excellent papers with research on a variety of topics, such as Internet behavior and social media. But needless to say, the world has not become digital only. This is merely one of many angles for viewing reality. The Internet is but one of the many channels to communicate and interact with customers. The importance of tangible sales channels and traditional media should not be overlooked.

In the academic literature, we seem to be lacking comprehensive frameworks that make it obvious how research into the ‘physical’ world ought to be reconciled with insights into ‘digital’ behavior. Even for the customer of Internet services, a business value proposition will almost always cross the boundaries between physical and virtual.

Experience with customer satisfaction surveys has shown, when you take a meta-analysis perspective, that a substantial proportion of *dissatisfaction* originates at the interface between disconnected business processes. For successful delivery of customer value, a seamless hand-off across business processes is essential. It was this need for a 360° view on client interactions that led to the rise of customer relationship management in the nineties.

Creating value for your customers requires a customer centric view in order to make interdepartmental collaboration effective. The evidence from customer surveys shows that business processes that cross organizational boundaries seem to be the ones that are most prone to service failures. These problems, unfortunately, are also the ones that are most difficult to fix.

Even for an Internet-only shop, the physical delivery of purchased products is where the rubber meets the road. The same holds for deployment of digital services that you may want to subscribe to or download. For a business transaction to be a 'success', all parts in this value chain need to be connected. When the courier service fails to meet its service-level agreement (SLA), your package will not arrive on the day you promised it to your customer.

In part, these potential gaps in value creation reflect the way most companies choose to organize themselves. As very few industries span the entire value chain, a significant level of collaboration and timely communication between companies is likely to be involved. When an Internet retailer like Amazon, for

instance, communicates a delivery date, they do so on the basis of SLA's with delivery parties the customer can choose from.

Hopefully the near future will see the emergence of overarching frameworks that enable us to integrate research from diverse angles. Instead of either 'physical' or 'digital' research topics, we'd rather see consolidated findings. A theoretically sound and well-researched framework should explicate how findings across various angles relate to one another.

These are exciting times for professionals and academics in our field. Developments in IT like Big Data, and the move to a corporate culture of facts-based or data-driven decision making, put us researchers in the driver's seat. The *Journal of Marketing Analytics* aspires to contribute to this sea change in the way corporations are managed and evaluated. Sound research will surely contribute to enabling that future.

Tom Breur
Founding Editor